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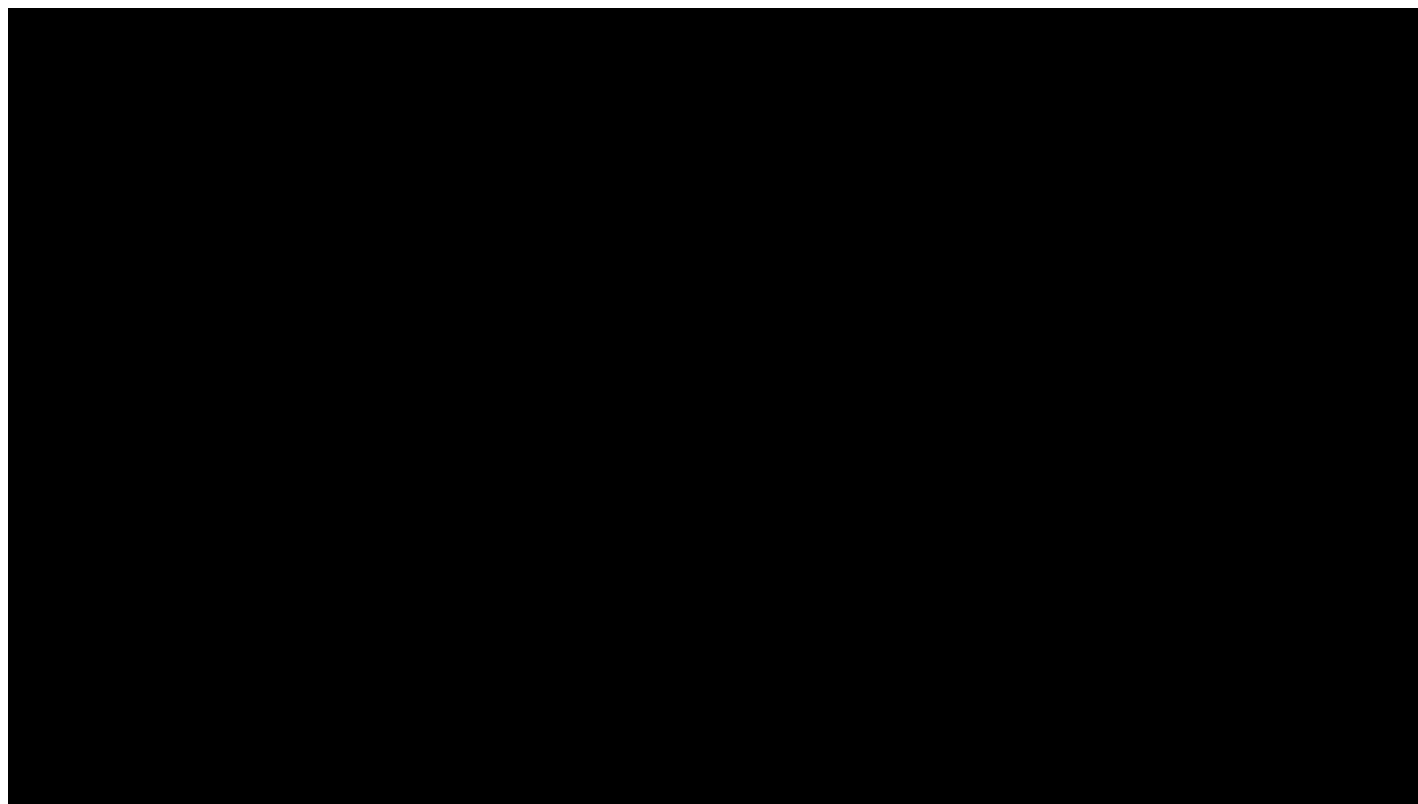
CRIME 10/25/2016 03:01 pm ET | Updated Oct 25, 2016

Cops Fatally Shoot Pregnant Native American Woman During 'Wellness Check'

Renee Davis was expecting her fourth child.



By Hilary Hanson



Sheriff's deputies in Washington state fatally shot a pregnant Native American woman on Friday after being dispatched to her home for a "wellness check."



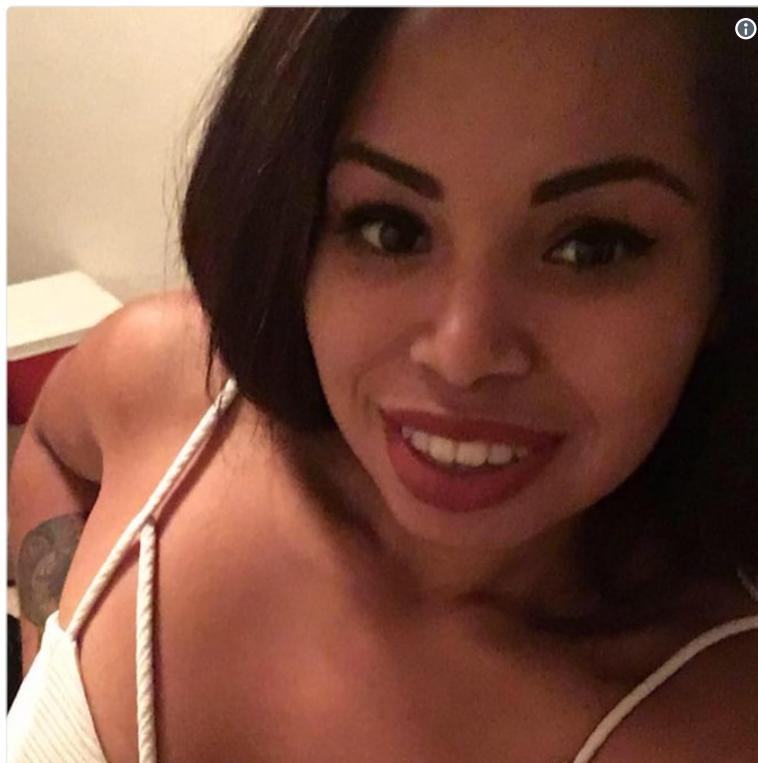
Bargala.

Sgt. Cindi West, a spokeswoman for the King County Sheriff's Department, told The Huffington Post that Davis sent her boyfriend a text message indicating she was distressed. The sheriff's department [contracts with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe](#) to provide law enforcement.

"Her boyfriend flagged down a deputy who was on patrol and showed him a text she had just sent saying she had a gun and was going to kill herself," West said. "She also sent a photo of a fresh cut to her arm, and said, in effect 'this will show you I'm serious.'"

What happened next is still unclear. Deputies arrived at Davis' home around 6:30 p.m., and the encounter ended with Davis being fatally shot by at least one deputy's bullet.

"It's really upsetting because it was a wellness check," Bargala told the Seattle Times. "Obviously, she didn't come out of it well."



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Pregnant single mom [#ReneeDavis](#) killed by police called to her home on tribal land in Washington for "welfare check"
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Law enforcement has released few details about Davis' interaction with police. The department told HuffPost in a statement that it had received a report saying Davis was "suicidal." They also allege that she had a handgun:



welfare of the woman and children. They found the woman inside the house armed with a handgun. Both deputies fired at the woman and she was struck at least once. Aid responded and the woman, 23, was pronounced dead at the scene.

The two deputies involved are on paid administrative leave pending an investigation. The sheriff's office will release more information after those deputies give their statements to investigators, according to the statement. West said neither has any complaints on record.

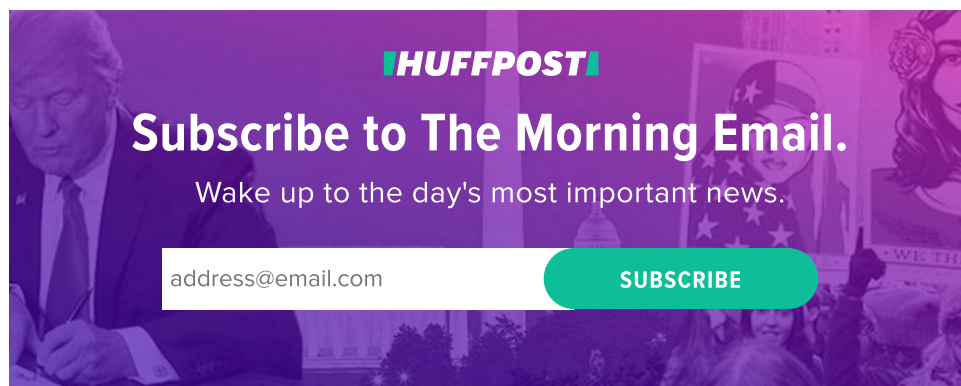
Bargala remembered Davis as a "soft person" who was never violent and loved the outdoors. She had previously worked as a teacher's aide at a preschool.

Native Americans are more likely to be killed by law enforcement than any other racial group in the United States, according to a [Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice survey](#) that looked at data from 1999 to 2011. (When the center broke down the groups by race and age, however, African-Americans ages 20 to 24 were the most likely to be killed.)

And cases of police violence against Native Americans — along with the #NativeLivesMatter movement — rarely make the mainstream news, Indian Country Today journalist [Simon Moya-Smith](#) noted last year in an [interview with Mic](#).

"We're not entirely on [the mainstream media's] radar — maybe for Indian mascots, but for police brutality?" he wrote. "Barely, if at all."

Police brutality toward people with mental illnesses is starting to receive some of the national attention it deserves — Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton [mentioned the issue during the first presidential debate](#) — but data shows there are still enormous problems with the way law enforcement officers interact with mentally ill people.



West noted that King County Sheriff's deputies undergo crisis intervention training specifically regarding "people with mental health issues or behavior crisis." She also said they receive "de-escalation and communications training."

On average, police officers in the U.S. [receive about 60 hours of firearm training](#), but only eight hours of de-escalation training and eight hours of training in crisis intervention.

That lack of proper training can have tragic consequences. One in four law enforcement killings involved a person with mental illness, according to a [Washington Post investigation tracking fatal police shootings](#) in 2015. In most cases,



Tactics that police consider standard can be disastrous when dealing with a person dealing with a mental health crisis.

Pointing a gun at someone or yelling, for instance, is “like pouring gasoline on a fire when you do that with the mentally ill,” Ron Holberg of the National Alliance on Mental Illness [told The Washington Post](#).

[NAMI provides a guide](#) for people who feel it’s necessary to call police due to a loved one’s mental health crisis, advising them on what information they should give law enforcement to keep the situation as safe as possible.

Other groups, like prison abolitionist organization Critical Resistance, urge citizens to [take numerous mitigating steps](#) to avoid having to call police, due to the outsized risk of violence from law enforcement.

This article has been updated with comments from Sgt. Cindi West.

**Hilary Hanson**

Senior trends editor, HuffPost

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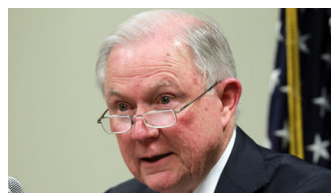
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